Colorful Early Fairbury Area Doctor

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Chauncey B. Ostrander's parents were Tobias Ostrander and Roxana Fish from Baden, Germany. Their family had two boys and two girls. One of these boys, C.B. Ostrander, was born in 1818 in New York.

When C.B. Ostrander was five years old, the family came to America and located at Poughkeepsie, New York. His mother then died of smallpox when he was nine years old. Just five days later, his father also died from smallpox.

Orphan C.B. Ostrander was taken in by the Troy Conference Methodist Episcopal church. He completed his studies in the common schools. Chauncey then started to study medicine under the instruction of Dr. Daniel Chapman of Lyons, New York. It took him three years and nine months to complete his medical training.

In 1833, he moved to Chicago and started a practice as a physician. After being a physician for four years, he received the appointment of Assistant Surgeon of the 2nd U.S. Infantry. He joined this military regiment in Florida. He practiced medicine in the U.S. Army for four years until 1841. Chauncey returned to Chicago and resumed his private medical practice. In 1846, at the age of twenty-eight, he married Miss Jane E. Holland in Chicago.

In 1850, Mr. and Mrs. Ostrander moved to Pontiac, Illinois. He started a new medical practice in the Pontiac area. Also, in 1850, Congress passed the Scrip Warrant Act of 1850. This new law awarded 160 acres of land to military veterans. Dr. Ostrander applied for 160 acres in Section 35 of Avoca Township. The warrant for this land noted that Dr. Ostrander served as a Private in Captain Kellos's Company, the Eighth Regiment of the United States Infantry.

In 1852, Dr. Ostrander bought forty more acres in Section 18 of Avoca Township. He purchased forty more acres in Section 18 in 1856. He paid $2.50 per acre for these eighty acres. Section 18 is just west of Lodemia or southwest of McDowell.

In 1859, Dr. C.B. Ostrander was chosen as a director for the Pontiac fair. He gave his mailing address as Hickory Point, Illinois. Postal records indicate there was a post office in Hickory Point between the years of 1856 and 1859. Hickory Creek flows through Section 28 and empties into the Vermilion River in McDowell. It is believed the ghost town of Hickory Point was located southwest of McDowell.

In 1869, the Chicago & Paducah Railroad laid its tracks from Dwight down to Strawn. Lodemia, northwest of Fairbury, was formed as a grain elevator stop on this railroad.

Lodemia initially had a grain elevator, a church, and a post office. In 1877, Dr. C.B. Ostrander was appointed the first postmaster of Lodemia.

From 1850 until the 1860s, Dr. Ostrander was the only physician for all of southern Livingston County.

As part of celebrating the nation's Centennial anniversary, the oldest settlers of Livingston County decided they should hold a reunion. Dr. Ostrander was appointed President of the Old Settlers' Association. He helped plan the first Old Settler's Day held in December of 1875. Tables were set up for 1,500 people to attend the first reunion in Pontiac. All of the tables were filled, and the day was spent relating incidents and anecdotes of the early days of Livingston County.

The Doctor was very fond of playing practical jokes upon his friends. He was also known for telling the largest tall tales in this area. After he moved from Pontiac to his farm west of Lodemia, he loved to describe the good qualities and exceptional features of his plantation to his old Chicago friends. He told them his plantation had a pond where he caught barrels and barrels of fine fish in an incredibly short amount of time. His Chicago friends never dreamed this was simply a "fish story." They decided to pay a visit to Ostrander's farm and go fishing in this wonderful pond. They wrote a letter to Ostrander and told him they would be arriving at his farm in a couple of weeks to go fishing.

A few weeks later, the Chicago people arrived with fishing tackle of various kinds. They were entertained the first night after they arrived on the farm. The next morning, the visitors asked for directions to the pond. Dr. Ostrander did not hesitate, and he took them to an old well located on the back of the farm. When they were just a short distance from the old well, Dr. Ostrander seemed to be very surprised and stopped the party. He told the Chicago visitors, "Well, gentlemen, this is the place where the pond has been." Ostrander then pointed to the old well and said, "I think the pond must have all leaked down into that hole."

Dr. Ostrander's patients were all farmers with little money. One day, a patron objected to the amount of Dr. Ostrander's bill. The Doctor informed the patient, very confidentially, that if he knew the cost of the medicine he had used in his case, he would not be surprised at his bill being so large. Ostrander told him the medicine he used had a cost of $2,700 an ounce. It required the services of ten men for four months to gather just one ounce, and nine out of ten men lost their lives while getting the medicine.

Dr. Ostrander and his wife had no children of their own. They had both been orphans when they were children. They decided to give parental care to eight other orphans and raised them to be successful citizens.

Ostrander was also a staunch Abolitionist. One day he came into Fairbury and found a fugitive slave chained to the floor of a two-story building. This fugitive slave was going to be returned to his master in Virginia. Using a crow-bar, sledgehammer, and chisel, the Doctor cut the shackles from the fugitive slave. He loaded the fugitive into a horse-drawn

buggy and delivered him to Dr. C. V. Dyer in Chicago. Ostrander also gave the fugitive $10 in cash. The fugitive was placed on the steamer "Illinois," commanded by Captain Blake. The steamer transported him to freedom in Maiden, Canada.

Dr. C.B Ostrander was one of the most colorful figures in early Fairbury. He was buried in Graceland Cemetery when he died in 1905.